

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMCONSUL BOMBAY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7084

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BOMBAY 0408

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: TECH IN

SUBJ: TARAPUR

1. DURING THE STOPOVER OF MRS LILLIAN CARTER'S GROUP IN BOMBAY DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY DUBS, NSC STAFF MEMBER THORNTON, AND INS COUNTRY DIRECTOR KUX, ALONG WITH CONSUL GENERAL CALLED ON IAEC CHAIRMAN SETHNA TO RE-ASSURE HIM THAT US GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES THE URGENCY OF THE TARAPUR FUEL RESUPPLY PROBLEM. IN OUTLINING OUR POSITION, DUBS FOLLOWED STATE 32210 EMPHASIZING USG AWARE THAT FUEL MUST REACH HYDERABAD BY THE END OF MAY IF A DISRUPTION IN THE FUEL ASSEMBLY PRODUCTION LINE IS TO BE AVOIDED. DUBS POINTED OUT THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IS DETERMINED TO CONSIDER NUCLEAR PROBLEMS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF AN OVERALL APPROACH WHICH GIVES FIRST PRIORITY TO NONPROLIFERATION OBJECTIVES. TO THIS END IT IS MAKING A STUDY OF ALL PROGRAMS WHICH AFFECT NONPROLIFERATION INCLUDING FUEL SUPPLY. THE STUDY IS IS TARGETTED FOR COMPLETION AT THE END OF FEBRUARY AND IT IS HOPED THAT DECISIONS CAN BE TAKEN ON URGENT NUCLEAR MATTERS IN MARCH. THEY WILL BE EXPECTED TO BE FULLY CONSISTENT WITH THE OVERALL APPROACH THAT IS DEVELOPED IN THE STUDY.

2. SETHNA APPRECIATED THIS ELUCIDATION OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION'S APPROACH TO NUCLEAR MATTERS. HE STRESSED THAT THE POWER

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SHORTAGE IN WESTERN INDIA IS BECOMING MORE CRITICAL WITH THE PASSING OF EACH MONTH. UNTIL CURRENT DRY SEASON TARAPUR POWER HAD ALWAYS BEEN DIVIDED IN EQUAL SHARES BETWEEN THE STATES OF GUJARAT AND MAHARASHTRA. NOW MAHARASHTRA, WHICH HAS A FAR LARGER INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, IS RUNNING INTO SUCH SHORTAGES THAT THE SUPPLY OF TARAPUR POWER HAS LED TO BE REVISED TO A RATION OF 8 TO 1 FAVORING MAHARASHTRA. THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY INDUCING GUJARAT

TO ACCEPT THE SAME TYPE OF RESTRICTIONS SUCH AS STAGGERING ABANDONMENT OF REGULAR WEEKEND SHUTDOWNS, ETC., THAT MAHARASHTRA HAS LONG ENDURED. SETHNA SPENT LITTLE TIME ON THE FUEL SUPPLY PROBLEM BUT DEVOTED MOST OF HIS EFFORTS TO EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR AN EARLY INDO-USG UNDERSTANDING ON WASTE STORAGE OR REMOVAL. IN EFFECT, HE SAID THAT HE WOULD SOON BE IN THE POSITION OF NOT BEING ABLE TO ADD ANY NEW FUEL BECAUSE HE COULD NOT REMOVE THE WASTE AT THE OTHER END OF THE PROCESS UNTIL HE HAS AGREEMENT WITH THE US ON THIS DIFFICULT PROBLEM.

3. SETHNA NOTED THAT EVEN IF AGREEMENT WAS REACHED SOON TO SHIP THE WASTE BACK TO THE US, IT WOULD BE PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO IMPLEMENT THIS PROGRAM IN TIME TO AVOID A BREAK IN POWER PRODUCTION. HE REMAINS BEARISH ON THIS POSSIBILITY BECAUSE OF THE HIGH COST, DIFFICULTIES OF TRANSPORT, AND RESISTANCE TO ACCEPTANCE OF THE FUEL BY ENVIRONMENTALIST GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES. HE REVIEWED STORAGE POSSIBILITIES IN INDIA AND ONCE AGAIN CLAIMED THAT ONCE THE PREFRE POOL IS PUT INTO USE FOR THE OCT 1977 DISCHARGE, HIS CAPACITY WILL BE EXHAUSTED. THERE WAS SOME INCONCLUSIVE DISCUSSION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF RERACKING AS A MEANS TO TEMPORARILY INCREASE STORAGE CAPACITY IN INDIA. SETHNA SAID THAT HE HAD ALREADY IN EFFECT EXHAUSTED THE SCOPE ALLOWED BY CONVENTIONAL RACKS. HE THOUGH SOME ADDITIONAL SPACE COULD BE CREATED BY THE USE OF HIGH-DENSITY, NEUTRON-ABSORBING RACKS, BUT IN THIS CASE HE WOULD HAVE TO HAVE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AT LEAST IN THE FORM OF MAKING MATERIALS AVAILABLE AND POSSIBLY IN THEIR INSTALLATION. HE NOTED THAT UNLESS THESE RACKS WERE READY BEFORE OCTOBER OF THIS YEAR, THERE WOULD BE NO POSSIBILITY OF INSTALLING THEM BECAUSE THE STORAGE POOLS AT TARAPUR AND AT PREFRE WOULD

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ALREADY BE FILLED UP. HE ESTIMATED THAT AT LEAST FORTY EMPTY SPACES WOULD BE NEEDED TO BEGIN THE RE-RACKING PROCESS. HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT HE IS NOT CERTAIN HOW MUCH GAIN IS POSSIBLE THROUGH RERACKING BECAUSE THE TARAPUR POOLS WERE PURCHASED ON A TURN-KEY BASIS WHICH MAY MEAN THAT THESE ELEVATED POOLS COULD NOT TAKE THE WEIGHT OF A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL FUEL ASSEMBLIES. HE IS LOOKING INTO THIS POINT.

4. DUBS NOTED THAT THESE TECHNICAL POINTS WILL HAVE TO BE RESOLVED AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION'S DETERMINATION TO INHIBIT PROLIFERATION WHILE AT THE SAME TIME GIVING CONCRETE EXPRESSION TO THE GOOD WILL IT HAS FOR INDIA. HE ASKED IF SETHNA HAD ANY SUGGESTIONS ON WHAT MIGHT BE DONE BY INDIA ON THESE POINTS. SETHNA SAID THESE MATTERS WENT TO THE HEART OF INDIAN NUCLEAR POLICY WHICH HE THOUGH HAD BEEN QUITE CONSISTENT OVER THE YEARS.

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-08 NRC-05 OES-06 FEAE-00 DODE-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BOMBAY 0408

HE FELT THAT WE UNDERSTOOD THE BASIC OBJECTIVES OF INDIA IN THIS AREA AND OF THE STEPS INDIA HAS TAKEN TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES. HE SAID HE WOULD NOT WANT TO SPEAK ON THE RECORD ON SUCH MATTERS AS A COMPLETE TEST BAN OR EVEN INDIA DE FACTO ADHERENCE TO A TEST MORATORIUM. HE COULD ONLY SAY THAT INDIA HAD ALWAYS INSISTED THAT THERE HAD TO BE THAT THE NEEDS OF THE NUCLEAR HAVE-NOTS (DEVELOPING COUNTRIES) HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED ALONG WITH THE DESIRES OF THE NUCLEAR POWERS. HE CLEARLY CONSIDERED INDIA IN THE FORMER CATEGORY EVEN THOUGH, AS HIS VISITORS POINTED OUT, IT IS THE SIXTH COUNTRY IN THE WORLD TO HAVE DEMONSTRATED ITS CAPACITY FOR EXPLODING NUCLEAR DEVICES. HE THOUGHT IT UNLIKELY THAT AS A GESTURE OF GOOD WILL INDIA WOULD BE WILLING TO PLACE THE KALPAKKAM (MADRAS) POWER REACTORS UNDER FULL FUEL CYCLE INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS, EVEN THOUGH THIS DID NOT SEEM TO PLACE ANY GREAT RESTRAINT ON INDIA'S BASIC NUCLEAR POLICY IN VIEW OF HIS CONTENTION THAT PLUTONIUM FROM POWER REACTORS IS NOT REALLY SUITABLE FOR EXPLOSIVE USE BECAUSE OF ITS HIGH IRRADIATION. HE SAID THAT BASICALLY INDIA JUST DOES NOT WANT OTHER PEOPLE LOOKING OVER ITS SHOULDERS IN AREAS WHERE IT HAS SLOGGED BY ITSELF THROUGH VERY DIFFICULT TIMES TO ACHIEVE THE POSITION IT NOW HAS. THIS REMARK WAS INTERESTING BECAUSE IT SEEMS TO IMPLY THAT HE WOULD BE WILLING TO CONSIDER EXTENDING FULL FUEL CYCLE SAFEGUARDS TO THE FACILITIES WHERE HE HAS RECEIVED INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION SUCH AS BOTH RAJASTHAN REACTORS. IT WOULD ALSO SEEM

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TO IMPLY THAT THERE WOULD BE EVEN MORE RESISTANCE TO PUTTING THE RESEARCH REACTORS UNDER INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS. SETHNA DID SAY

AT ONE POINT IF A MORATORIUM WERE ACCOMPANIED BY SOME MOVEMENT TOWARD NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT, INDIA MIGHT WELL BE INCLINED TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING. HOWEVER HE NOTED THAT THE EXPERIENCE OF THOSE WHO SIGNED THE NPT WITH GREAT EXPECTATION UNDER ARTICLE III OF THAT AGREEMENT HAD INDEED BEEN DISAPPOINTED BECAUSE THE NUCLEAR HAVES HAD NOT BEEN FORTHCOMING. THROUGHOUT THIS PART OF THE DISCUSSION SETHNA SEEMED TO BE EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR SYMMETRY IN AN AGREEMENT WITHOUT EXPLICITLY STATING IT. HE NOTED THAT MANY PEOPLE IN THE GOI HAD FELT THAT THE NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA HAD BEEN LONG SERIES OF DEMANDS ON INDIA WHICH IN ONE CASE HAD ALREADY PROVED FRUITLESS FOR INDIA.

5. THE ONLY AREA IN WHICH SETHNA WAS FULLY FORTHCOMING ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGAINST PROLIFERATION UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES WAS EXPORTS. HE ONCE AGAIN FLATLY SAID THAT INDIA WAS NOT NOW EXPORTING ANY SENSITIVE MATERIALS AND WAS DETERMINED NOT TO DO SO IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

6. COMMENT: THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME IN TALKS

WITH US THAT SETHNA HAD COMPARED HIS NEGOTIATION WITH THE US WITH THOSE WITH CANADA. AS SETHNA PICKS HIS WORDS CAREFULLY, THIS COMPARISON MAY BE OMINOUS AS CANADA RANKS AT THE BOTTOM OF HIS LIST OF FAVORED COUNTRIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, SETHNA WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO PLACE HIMSELF AMONG THOSE INDIAN OFFICIALS WHO STILL FAVOR DILIGENT EFFORTS AND A RESPONSIVE POSTURE IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE US. DURING THE MEETING HE INSTRUCTED HIS AIDES TO PREPARE MORE FINANCIAL AND ENGINEERING DATA FOR US ON THE STORAGE PROBLEM. HE ALSO SAID HE WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO BE FORTHCOMING QUICKLY ON SPOT REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION ON THE FUEL FABRICATION PROCESS EVEN THOUGH HE CLAIMS HE HAS ALREADY PROVIDED ENOUGH TO GIVE US A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THIS PROBLEM. HE ONLY ASKED THAT WE NOT ASK HIM TO WORK

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EVERY WEEKEND AS OCCURRED LAST SPRING.

7 CONGEN BELIEVES THAT THIS VISIT WITH SETHNA WAS MOST WORTHWHILE. HE WENT OUT OF HIS WAY IN A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION AFTER THE GROUP'S DEPARTURE TO ASSURE THE CONGEN THAT HE VALUED THIS TALK AND THAT HE HAD HIS STAFF WORKING URGENTLY ON THE DATA HE HAD PROMISED DURING THE CONVERSATION.

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